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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000728

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [NSC](#) [BH](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: BURMESE EXILE COMMUNITY STILL SEARCHING FOR A  
CONSOLIDATED STRATEGY

Classified By: Political Officer J.R. Littlejohn, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

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11. (C) In the aftermath of a failed UN Security Council resolution, members of the Burmese exile community are advocating a variety of strategies, including enhanced USG engagement with China to encourage inclusion of NLD and ethnic groups in the final phase of Burma's National Convention, establishing a mechanism similar to the Six-Party Talks focused on Burma, and requesting the international community to pressure the government of Burma (GOB) to use election monitors in any future referendum. Post finds the exile community has some ideas that appear a bit unrealistic. A consolidated approach is expected to emerge after a late-February 2007 meeting of the Strategy Coordinating Committees (SCC) consisting of all the NCUB member organizations and some ceasefire groups (septel). Increasingly concerned with the possibility of the Europeans softening their approach to Burma, members of the exile community are beefing up their shuttle diplomacy. End Summary.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

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12. (C) On January 29, David Taw, Chairman of the National Council for the Union of Burma Foreign Affairs Committee, and Dr. Lian H. Sakhong, General Secretary of the Ethnic Nationalities Council (ENC) told us they would like to see Burma's National Convention process opened to enable free discussion of all relevant issues, and include the NLD and ethnic groups in the constitutional drafting process. Specifically they would like to see the USG and China work together toward this goal.

13. (C) Taw said his contacts inside Burma suggest the NC will resume in May and this could be the final session. He said the NCUB and ENC sometimes consult with 13 ceasefire groups attending the convention, specifically mentioning the New Mon State Party, Kachin Independence Organization, and the Shan State Army. Taw said the 13 ceasefire groups he contacts are trying to find ways to introduce a federal construct into the process so ethnic groups have rights. He mentioned that prior proposals have not received a response, but they hope their submissions will be addressed before any constitution is adopted. Taw said ceasefire groups are frustrated with the brush-off their suggestions have received to date, which is one reason why many exile, ethnic, and pro-democracy groups have refused to legitimate the NC process by not participating in it.

14. (C) Zaw Zaw Htun of Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB) also separately expressed concerns with the outcome of the National Convention. Htun said they would like the United States and the international community to begin thinking

about a future election process. Specifically, the FDB is urging international actors to push for a referendum that is organized by voting rather than public rally, and that includes international election monitors. According Htun, members of the exile community are concerned that the regime would hold a rally packed with members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a puppet organization staffed by senior leaders of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), which will rubberstamp the constitution.

#### HOLDING THE SUPPORT BASE TOGETHER

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15. (C) In a January 25 conversation, Debbie Stothard, Coordinator of the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma) said the exile community is expanding its international diplomacy efforts. Stothard said the exile community is comfortable with the support received from the United States and would like to see sanctions against the GOB continued. However, she said, the exiles are increasingly worried about Europe.

16. (C) Taw and Sakhong singled out Germany as eager to change the European Union's level of engagement with the regime. According to Taw, the Germans are concerned that past practices of freezing assets and limiting visas are not effective. Sakhong believes the EU is pushing for humanitarian engagement with the regime. Members of the NCUB flew to various European countries last week to encourage staying the current course on Burma.

#### THE ASEAN INTERPARLIAMENTARY MYANMAR CAUCUS (AIPMC)

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17. (C) Taw said the NCUB is focusing on the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC). The NCUB would like ASEAN governments to take a tougher stance on the regime. He said that the Foreign Affairs branch of the NCUB talks to MPs, but that governments often have a different stance from parliamentarians. The NCUB hopes Singapore specifically will encourage MPs to join the Parliamentary Caucus on Burma. Taw was less enthusiastic about Laos, Vietnam and Brunei because they have "no history of working with AIPMC." (Comment: Laos and Vietnam also have no history of advocating for democracy. End Comment.)

#### SIX PARTY TALKS ON BURMA?

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18. (C) The exile community has some ideas that appear to us very unrealistic. Sakhong suggested a new approach to enhancing opportunities for dialogue might be modeled after the Six Party Talks on North Korea. He said this forum for engagement might produce a much needed opportunity for China to weigh in on a possible solution alongside the United States. Like others, he emphasized the importance of engaging China in a solution on the current political stasis in Burma.

19. (C) Zaw Oo a member of the Zahu Development Institute said that he cannot completely endorse the idea of Six-Party Talks on Burma, because he is not sure who should be involved in such a multilateral setting. However, he could see using this kind of framework to engage Burma with the USG playing a key role in building an international consensus (read: getting China to support any outcome).

#### COMMENT

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10. (C) Almost 20 years since the 1988 student uprising and the NLD's 1990 landslide election victory in Burma, exile groups are struggling to find a consolidated

one-size-fits-China (and everyone else) strategy for bringing democratic change to Burma. The National Convention, considered a sham process by most members of the exile community, is still viewed by some members of the NCUB and umbrella groups as the only game in town and these groups view gaining a foothold in the constitution's drafting and/or adoption period as an important step toward democratization. This will spark a strong negative reaction from the NLD and others.

BOYCE